



Tavistock Urban District

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

FOR

YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1951

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

The following members of the Council served on the above Committee during the year :

Chairman : MRS. M. E. BAZLEY

Vice-Chairman : G. A. KNOTT

Members : W. H. GULLEY
MRS. O. S. JOHNSTONE
E. E. KERSWILL
H. MOORE
F. G. QUANT
S. C. WILLIS

PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF

Medical Officer of Health :

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D., D.P.H.

Surveyor and Chief Sanitary Inspector :

H. F. ROBINSON, F.I.A.S., M.R.San.I.

Additional Sanitary Inspector and Meat Inspector :

H. MANSBRIDGE,, A.R.San.I., M.S.I.A.

M.O.H.'s Secretary :

MISS M. J. BODDY

Meteorological Observer :

MR. T. H. HARRIS



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Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Bazley and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my annual report for the year ending 31st December, 1951, in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Health.

The general health of the town remained good throughout the year and no epidemic occurred although whooping cough was slightly more prevalent than usual. Mumps were also fairly prevalent, but not being notifiable by practitioners accurate figures are not available. It is, however, known that quite a high proportion of cases were adults who were severely affected and had to endure a protracted convalescence.

A survey table for the past twenty years is appended as census figures are now available :

Year	Population	No. of Inhabited Houses	Persons Per House	Birth Rate	Death Rate
1931	4,478	1,089	4.1	12.7	14.0
1932	4,599	1,112	4.1	10.8	15.8
1933	4,703	1,139	4.1	11.9	13.1
1934	4,734	1,162	4.1	13.0	14.7
1935	5,460	1,458	3.7	9.8	14.9
1936	5,490	1,509	3.6	8.7	12.5
1937	5,540	1,540	3.6	11.4	15.4
1938	5,556	1,581	3.5	10.7	13.4
Statistics unreliable during war years					
1946	6,015	1,651	3.9	12.9	14.9
1947	5,974	1,702	3.5	16.6	14.2
1948	6,100	1,728	3.5	11.9	15.9
1949	6,150	1,785	3.4	11.0	14.6
1950	6,140	1,823	3.4	10.1	12.1
1951	6,181	1,837	3.4	10.2	13.4

It will be seen that the number of inhabited houses has risen from 1,089 in 1931 to 1,837 in 1951, an increase of 748 properties. 296 of which were added in 1935 by the extension of the town boundary into Whitchurch parish. Whilst the total number of inhabited houses has risen by 748 units, the population increase during this same twenty years has only been 1,703 persons and this is reflected in the continuous fall in the population density per house. The latest figure of 3.4 persons per house gives a fair average of conditions in general, but it is well known that there still exist several patches of property where overcrowding and unhealthy conditions obtain—to deal with these finds work for the future.

The vital statistics as appended compare very favourably with the past. The causes of death have been considerably condensed from the Registrar General's list in the interest of clarity. One obvious cause of death is not permitted by authority—old age. This is somewhat amazing as any doctor knows that senility on a death certificate in cases of people over 75 years of age is more accurate than, say, heart disease. The heart is worn out and so is the rest of the body—hence senility.

SECTION A.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area (in acres)	...	...	...	...	2,098
Population—1931 Census	...	...	...	...	5,130
Population—1951 Census	...	...	...	...	5,889
Estimated Home Population—Mid 1951	...	...	...	...	6,181
Number of Inhabited Houses	...	...	...	...	1,837
Rateable Value	...	...	...	...	£46,349
Product of Penny Rate	...	...	...	...	£184
Loan Debt	...	...	...	...	£354,832

VITAL STATISTICS

				Male	Female	Total
Live Births	...	...	...	28	35	63
Legitimate	...	...	...	27	33	
Illegitimate	...	...	...	1	2	
						England & Wales
Crude Birth Rate per 1,000 population	...				10.2	15.5
Corrected Birth Rate	...	...	...		11.8	
Still Births	...	...	...		Nil	
Still Birth Rate per 1,000 live and still births					—	0.36
				Male	Female	Total
Deaths	...	...	...	44	39	83
						England & Wales
Crude Death Rate per 1,000 population	...				13.4	12.5
Corrected Death Rate	...	...	...		9.8	
Deaths from Maternal Causes	...	...	...		Nil	
Maternal Mortality	...	...	...		—	0.79
Deaths of Infants under 1 year	...	...	...		3	
Infant Mortality	...	...	...		47.6	29.6

The chief causes of death were as follows :—

INFECTIOUS CAUSES :

Pulmonary Tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	2
Influenza	...	...	...	...	4

GENERAL CAUSES :

Heart Disease	...	...	...	...	26
Cerebral Vascular Disease	...	...	...	...	13
Coronary Disease	...	...	...	...	9
Cancer	...	...	...	...	8
Bronchitis	...	...	...	...	4
Arteriosclerosis	...	...	...	...	1
Diabetes	...	...	...	...	1
Gastric Ulcer	...	...	...	...	1
Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	1
Accidental	...	...	...	...	4
Other Causes	...	...	...	...	6

INFANTS UNDER 1 YEAR :

Prematurity	...	...	...	...	2
Haemorrhagic disease of new born	...	...	...	...	1

Total 83

AGE OF DEATH TABLE

Age at Death			Male	Female	
Infants under 1 year	...	...	1	2	
1 - 5 years	...	...	—	—
5 - 15	...	...	—	—
15 - 25	...	...	—	—
25 - 35	...	...	—	—
35 - 45	...	...	—	—
45 - 55	...	...	1	2	
55 - 65	...	...	6	9	
65 - 75	...	...	16	7	
75 and over	...	...	20	19	
			44	39	Total : 83

SECTION B.

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE HEALTH SERVICES

There was no change in the health services during the year apart from minor administrative adjustments.

The Hospital Management Committee are responsible for the Hospital and employ the specialists; the Devon Executive Council administers the service supplied by the local doctors; the County Council are responsible for ambulances, clinics, welfare and schools and employ their own staff; and the Local Authority employ the M.O.H. Between these four groups, apart from social contact, there is no co-ordination whatsoever and the M.O.H., who is supposed to be familiar with everything which may affect the health of his people (at least those are his terms of reference), frequently wonders if he is in the picture at all.

MATERNITY ACCOMMODATION: It is very pleasing to be able to report that at the time of writing this report work is going ahead steadily on the adaptation of St. Michael's and Endmoor as a Maternity Home, and the Hospital Management Committee state that they hope these premises will be available for use within 6 months of the beginning of the new financial year in April, 1952. It appears that this long-felt need will at last soon be fulfilled.

SECTION C.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE AREA

Water Supply

SUFFICIENCY: During 1951 the supply throughout the town was adequate for all purposes and at no time was it necessary to introduce restrictions.

No visible progress was made during the year with the scheme to augment the water supply from Wilminstone Quarry. This was largely due to the protracted legal formalities which must be complied with before the scheme can receive Ministerial approval. As much as possible, however, of the preparatory work of an administrative nature has been completed.

The water mains in West Street and Ford Street were renewed during the year, and the new main across the moor from the high level reservoir to Middlemoor Village was almost completed. At the time of writing this report this new main has actually been completed, with the result that an area which previously had a most inadequate supply now enjoys an abundant supply. The inhabitants of this area have expressed their gratification at this improved service.

A scheme to re-organise the water distribution system received the energetic consideration of the Council during 1951 whereby it is hoped that during 1952 a commencement will be made to this scheme which entails the installation of booster pumps and new chlorination, lime dosing and dechlorination plants. The boosting of certain mains is essential in order to provide a satisfactory supply at all times to houses on the higher levels such as Glanville Road and Uplands. Furthermore, this boosting will make possible residential development on sites where previously this has been impracticable.

The new chlorinators and dechlorinators will ensure that although the purity of the supply is maintained no unpleasant tastes of chlorine will occur in the water.

The addition of a small quantity of lime to the raw water will not be noticeable to the consumer, but will obviate a great deal of corrosion which now takes place in the mains, supply pipes and fittings.

QUALITY : Routine quarterly samples from the Kilworthy and Sandy Park distribution mains were taken during the year and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory for bacteriological examination. During July and November, owing to the inefficient working of the chlorinator, bad reports were obtained, with the result that further check samples were taken and daily samples taken whilst the chlorinator was sent away for complete overhaul, during which time a drip feed of chloros was in operation.

A total of 20 samples of treated water was taken during the year and apart from the unsatisfactory reports previously mentioned all were found to be in Class 1.

In addition, eight samples of the untreated water (four from each source) were taken for bacteriological examination and the reports show that although at times a sample of excellent purity can be obtained, generally speaking the water contains gross bacterial contamination and is quite unfit for drinking in the raw state.

The following are the results of chemical examinations of samples from the two piped supplies taken on 20th December :—

	Kilworthy Intake	Sandy Park Intake
Chlorine present as Chlorides	1.5	1.7
Nitrogen present as Nitrites	0	0
Nitrogen present as Nitrates	0.22	0.22
Phosphates	0	slight trace
Sulphates	—	—
Free Carbon Dioxide	—	—
Total Hardness equivalent to Calcium Carbonate	5.4	5.5
Temporary Hardness (annulled by boiling) ...	1.6	2.3
Permanent Hardness (not altered by boiling) ...	3.8	3.2
Saline Ammonia	0	0
Albuminoid Ammonia	0	0
Oxygen absorbed in 4 hours at 27 deg. C. ...	0.025	0.02
Oxygen absorbed immediately	—	—
Lead	0	0
Copper	0	0
Zinc	0	0
Iron in solution	0	0
Iron in sedimentary form	0	0
Manganese	0	0
Total Solid Constituents	8.0	9.0
Organic Matter observed in igniting the Solid Constituents	very slight	trace
Free Chlorine	0	0
Hydrogen Ion Concentration equivalent to p.H.	6.2	6.2

PLUMBO-SOLVENCY : On no occasion has lead been found in a sample of water submitted for chemical analysis.

SUPPLY FROM PIPED MAINS : The great majority of dwellings in the area have a supply piped into the house. A small proportion, chiefly in the older part of the town, have a standpipe in the yard immediately at the rear.

TREATMENT : Both the main supply from Kilworthy and the subsidiary supply from Sandy Park are chlorinated by simple chlorination, a residual of .15 p.p.m. being obtained. In view of the reports received on the raw water referred to earlier it is obvious that chlorination of the water must continue.

Sewerage

The main sewage disposal plant at Crowndale continues to operate satisfactorily. The system employed is treatment in sedimentation tanks followed by land irrigation, the final effluent being discharged into the River Tavy.

Reports on samples of this effluent and also the river water above and below the point of discharge which were taken on 11th December prove that the effluent is of a highly satisfactory quality and is devoid of pollutive power, whilst the river water is very clean above and below the point of discharge.

During the year the Council have tackled the serious dilapidations to the subsidiary works at East Crowndale referred to in my report for 1950, with the result that the necessary repairs and rebuilding are well advanced and should be completed during 1952.

Samples of the effluent from this plant, together with samples of the river water, were taken on 14th December and the reports show that the effluent is quite satisfactory and has no pollutive action on the clean river water.

Swimming Bath

Prior to the commencement of the season a great improvement to the appearance of the swimming bath was effected by the application of a chlorine resistant paint to the interior of the bath. This has the result of not only improving the appearance of the water, but reduces labour costs previously entailed in limewashing after the fortnightly emptying and cleansing.

The bath was well patronised during the season, particularly by parties of children from the local schools.

Routine samples of water from the bath were taken during the season and submitted for bacteriological examination. The reports show that whilst the water is quite pure on entering the bath, after a few days it is necessary to re-chlorinate, and that it is essential the water be changed once per fortnight.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE AREA

218 visits were made to premises as a result of complaints received regarding sanitary defects, and 30 informal intimations were made to the responsible persons to remedy these defects.

In only three instances was it found necessary to serve Statutory Notices, each of which was satisfactorily complied with.

The checking of housing applications entailed a considerable number of visits to dwellings during the year, a total of 187 being made. The opportunity was taken at the same time to investigate any complaints the applicants made regarding their housing conditions.

DISINFECTION AND DISINFESTATION : The area is remarkably free from verminous premises and only two complaints of such conditions were received and dealt with during the year. In addition five premises were fumigated after the occurrence of infectious disease or at the request of the tenant or owner following a death in the house. No charge for this service is made by the Public Health Department to either the tenant or owner.

RODENT CONTROL : The Council continued to operate this scheme by direct labour throughout the year under review. Greater attention was paid to the refuse tip and sewage works, and the results achieved were most satisfactory. The sewers throughout the town were also regularly inspected and treated.

A total of 34 council, private and business premises were treated during the year. This alone involved 450 visits, but the occupiers concerned were generally very satisfied with the results.

Factories Acts. 1937 and 1948

1. INSPECTIONS :

Premises (1)	Number on Register (2)	Number of		
		Inspec- tions (3)	Written Notices (4)	Occupiers Prose- cuted (5)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ...	15	23	—	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority ...	55	60	3	—
(iii) Other Premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	3	4	—	—
TOTAL ...	73	87	3	—

2. CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND :

Particulars (1)	Number of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecu- tions were instituted (6)
	Found (2)	Remedied (3)	To H.M. Inspector (4)	By H.M. Inspector (5)	
Want of Cleanliness ...	5	4	—	—	—
Overcrowding ...	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable Temperature ...	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate Ventilation ...	2	1	—	—	—
Ineffective d r a i n a g e of floors ...	1	1	—	—	—
Sanitary Conveniences :					
(a) Insufficient	1	—	—	—	—
(b) Unsuitable or defective ...	2	1	—	—	—
(c) Not separate for sexes ...	—	—	—	—	—
Other offences ...	—	—	1	—	—
TOTAL ...	11	7	1	—	—

3. OUTWORK :

Nature of Work	No. of out-workers in August list required by Section 110 (1) (c)
Wearing Apparel — Making, etc.	1

Weather

The Meteorologist supplied the following statistics for the year :

Height above sea level—457 feet in Stevenson Screen.

Latitude—50.33 N.; Longitude—4.10 W.

The total amount of rain was 54.17ins.

The total number of rainy days was 212.

The average amount of rain is 49.9ins.

The greatest fall was 1.17ins. on 4th November.

RAINFALL FOR 1951

Month	Total Depth in Inches	Greatest fall in 24 hours (inches)	Date	No. of days on which rain fell
January	5.78	1.07	10th	22
February	5.40	1.11	15th	22
March	5.80	1.00	6th	20
April	2.23	0.35	12th	18
May	3.54	0.54	23rd	14
June	2.48	1.12	9th	15
July	2.54	0.66	22nd	8
August	7.09	0.81	25th	23
September	4.47	0.88	14th	16
October	1.77	0.41	29th	11
November	8.26	1.17	4th	24
December	4.81	0.73	28th	19
	<hr/> 54.17 <hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/> 212 <hr/>

SECTION D.

HOUSING

During 1951 eight new council houses and 32 single bedroom maisonettes were erected and occupied, making a total of 170 units completed since building recommenced in 1946. Two houses were erected and occupied by private individuals. At 31st December, 1951, the Council controlled 314 council houses (counting each maisonette as a single unit) and 16 requisitioned premises. The following list indicates the different types of houses and bungalows owned by the Council:—

No.	Type
4	4 bedroom houses (built prior to 1946)
208	3 bedroom houses (116 built prior to 1946)
60	2 bedroom houses (24 built prior to 1946)
10	2 bedroom old persons' bungalows
32	Single bedroom maisonettes
<hr/> 314 <hr/>	

From the above it can be seen that the Council have continued to vary the types of houses built in the light of applications received and in an endeavour to deal as fairly as possible with all applications and not to cater only for the larger families.

During the year additional land adjoining the Greenlands Estate was obtained for further extension to provide for a general shop in addition to dwellings and also to allow space for a place of worship.

It is noticeable that the majority of the tenants on the Greenlands Estate are taking a great pride in their respective houses and gardens, with the result that the Estate generally is now becoming most attractive and will bear comparison with any other Council Estate in the South West.

The number of council house applicants on the register at 31st December, 1951, was 220—this figure does not include those applicants who had been allocated a house under the Council's system of forward allocation.

On comparing this figure with the figure for 31st December, 1950, viz.: 188, it would appear that the housing situation has become worse in spite of the year's building.

This, however, is not so as it must be remembered that two years ago the number of points an applicant required to ensure being on the "short list" was at least 40, whereas last year short lists have been prepared for the consideration of the Committee of all applicants with 20 points and over.

It follows therefore that as the Council's points system indicates to a certain extent the housing conditions of the applicants, although the number of applicants is still quite high, the housing conditions of these applicants is by no means as desperate as were those of applicants two years ago.

On analysis it was found that of the 220 applicants 97 were resident in the Rural Area, and of this 97 only 34 were actually employed in Tavistock.

The following list indicates the different types of accommodation required by the 220 applicants :—

Single bedroom requirement	...	...	49 applicants
2 bedroom requirement	...	...	113 applicants
3 bedroom requirement	...	...	49 applicants
4 bedroom requirement	8 applicants
5 bedroom requirement	1 applicant

Total	220
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SECTION E.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

The Public Health Department staff did not relax in their efforts throughout the year to maintain a high standard of cleanliness of all foods prepared and offered for sale to the public.

In this connection it must be stated that wholehearted assistance and co-operation has been given them by the traders concerned.

Milk

During the year 22 visits were made to dairies and milkshops. No formal action under the Regulations was found to be necessary.

The following table shows the number of samples taken during the period under review and the results obtained :—

Type of Milk				Total Samples Taken	Passed	Failed
Ordinary	...	...	...	26	25	1
Tuberculin Tested	...	...	...	14	13	1
Pasteurised	...	...	...	10	10	—
				—	—	—
Totals	...	...	...	50	48	2
				—	—	—

All milk samples are submitted to the Pathological Laboratory at the South Devon and East Cornwall Hospital, Greenbank Road, Plymouth, for examination and report.

Ice Cream

4 premises in the Urban Area were registered under Section 14 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, for the manufacture and sale of ice cream.

In addition 16 premises were registered for sale and storage purposes only.

All these premises were regularly visited during the year, a total of 48 visits being made.

54 samples of ice cream were taken for examination at the South Devon and East Cornwall Hospital Pathological Department, and the reports show that all satisfied the prescribed test.

Bakehouses

Regular inspections of the 6 bakehouses were carried out during the year, a total of 47 visits being made.

It was found necessary to advise and assist some proprietors to eradicate infestations of black beetles and cockroaches, insects which are a constant menace to bakehouses.

One sub-standard bakehouse has been considerably improved by the removal of the confectionery trade to a more modern part of the premises, and it is hoped that the completion of the whole scheme by the construction of a modern bakehouse to deal with the bread will materialise.

It must be remembered, however, that the present-day high building costs deter many traders who wish to improve their premises.

Restaurants and Cafés

These premises had a very brisk trade during the summer months owing to the considerable number of holiday makers, coach parties, etc., who visited the town.

The traders concerned appear to be fully alive to the fact that the public nowadays look for, and are attracted to, clean premises.

All premises were regularly visited and although 99 inspections were made, in no instances were conditions such that formal complaint was necessary.

Food Poisoning

No notifications of food poisoning were received during the year.

Meat Inspection

The town abattoir continued to serve a large area, and although 11,721 carcasses were dealt with, each carcass was examined before distribution to the Wholesale Depot. This inspection of carcasses entailed 606 visits, many of which were out of normal working hours.

Routine visits are made to the abattoir by the Ministry of Food Area Technical Adviser, who is completely satisfied with the method and efficiency of meat inspection in Tavistock.

During the period when killings were low the opportunity was taken to carry out considerable structural improvements to the abattoir. Old timber lairages were rebuilt in cement rendered concrete block and the majority of the joinery work was renewed and all repainted.

A scheme to improve the overhead runway by means of a points switch was in hand at the end of the year. This is in preparation for the electric carcass splitter and the electric hoist which are to be provided and installed by the Ministry of Food.

The number of animals inspected and the carcasses, parts and organs condemned are set out in the following table :—

Carcases Inspected and Condemned

	Cattle, excluding cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs
Number killed ...	1762	1149	1889	6144	777
Number inspected	1762	1149	1889	6144	777
All diseases except tuberculosis :					
Whole carcasses condemned ...	9	37	63	71	12
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	1084	689	13	1632	89
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis ...	62.03 %	63.18 %	3.02 %	27.71 %	12.99 %
Tuberculosis only :					
Whole carcasses condemned ...	7	39	7	1	8
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	77	221	—	—	81
Percentage of the number inspected a f f e c t e d with tuberculosis ...	4.76 %	22.71 %	.57 %	.01 %	11.45 %

4 cases of Congenital Tuberculosis in calves were notified to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for the dams to be traced. Notification was received in all of these cases that the dams had been traced and destroyed.

Cysticercus Bovis

All bovine carcasses were carefully examined for this infestation.

42 cases were detected and the carcasses and offal dealt with in the prescribed manner.

Other Foodstuffs

The usual assortment of foodstuffs, found on inspection to be unsound, was voluntarily surrendered by the traders concerned and removed from their premises for destruction.

SECTION F.

**PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER
INFECTIOUS DISEASE**

The following cases of infectious disease were notified during the year by medical practitioners :—

Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	19
Measles	...	...	...	...	7
Poliomyelitis	...	...	...	...	1

The following cases of infectious disease were notified from the schools in the town during the year :—

Mumps	...	...	...	...	28
German Measles	...	...	...	...	9
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	8
Measles	...	...	...	...	4
Chicken Pox	...	...	...	...	1

Diphtheria

No case of this disease occurred during the year.

Poliomyelitis

One case of this disease occurred in a schoolboy at Kelly College. He had no paralysis and was soon fit and well again.

Tuberculosis

Nine new cases of Pulmonary and one new case of Non-Pulmonary Tuberculosis were notified during the year, and two deaths recorded from the former.

At the end of the year 50 cases of tuberculosis remained on the register as follows :—

Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
Males	..... 27	Males	..... 4
Females	..... 14	Females	..... 5

In conclusion I would thank the Chairman and Council for the ready hearing I have received at all times, and also Mr. Robinson, who has been responsible for the sanitary section of this report.

I am, Mrs. Bazley and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,

Medical Officer of Health.

